

Follow that Plastic Bottle

Many of the things we use in our daily lives are made from resources that can be recycled or reused—saving energy and allowing us to use these resources over and over again. For example, beverage containers are made from a variety of resources and the process of making them uses a great deal of energy. Recycling saves these materials and requires less energy. Plastic bottles, for instance, can be melted down and made into new things like more plastic bottles, fiber filling for jackets, or used to make plastic lumber products.

Procedure:

1. Show your students the pile of clay. Ask them to pretend this is all of the clay there is in the world. Once they use it up, there will be no more. Tell them they will make bottles with the clay and will pretend to drink water from the bottles. Then the bottles will be thrown away.
2. Give each student a small piece of clay and ask him/her to make a bottle and to pretend to drink from it.
3. Collect their bottles and pretend to throw them away. Ask them if they want more pretend water. Repeat this procedure until all of the clay is gone.
4. Ask your students:
 - Where did all of the clay go?
 - Where did all of the clay bottles go?
 - How are we going to get more if there is no more clay to make bottles, and there is nothing else to make bottles with?
 - What could we have done to make the clay last longer?
5. Retrieve the clay bottles that have been “thrown away.” Give one to each student and make the rest of the bottles into a pile of clay again. Tell them we are going to start over and to pretend they have not thrown their first bottles away. Ask them: What can we do with these bottles so that the clay will last longer?

Learning Objective: To introduce the concept of recycling and reuse.

Subjects: Environmental Education, Family and Consumer Education

Wisconsin Model Academic Standards: EE A.4.1, B.4.3, B.4.9, C.4.1 FCE A.2

Grades: K-3

Materials:

- Clay—enough for each student to make two or three ‘bottles’
- Examples of bottles (glass & plastic) and cans that can be recycled
- Fiber filling from an old jacket



6. Discuss the term *recycle*, which means, using the same materials to make new products.
7. Tell your students they are going to recycle their bottles. Collect the bottles and mix them all together again. Give each student a piece of this clay and have him/her make a new bottle. Tell them *this* is recycling. They made new bottles from used bottles. Many materials can be recycled over and over again. Show them examples of bottles (glass & plastic) and cans that can be recycled.
8. You may want to tell your students that some materials can be recycled into new things that look different from what they originally were. Have them make a clay cup out of their clay bottle. Show them a plastic water bottle and an example of a product made from recycled plastic.

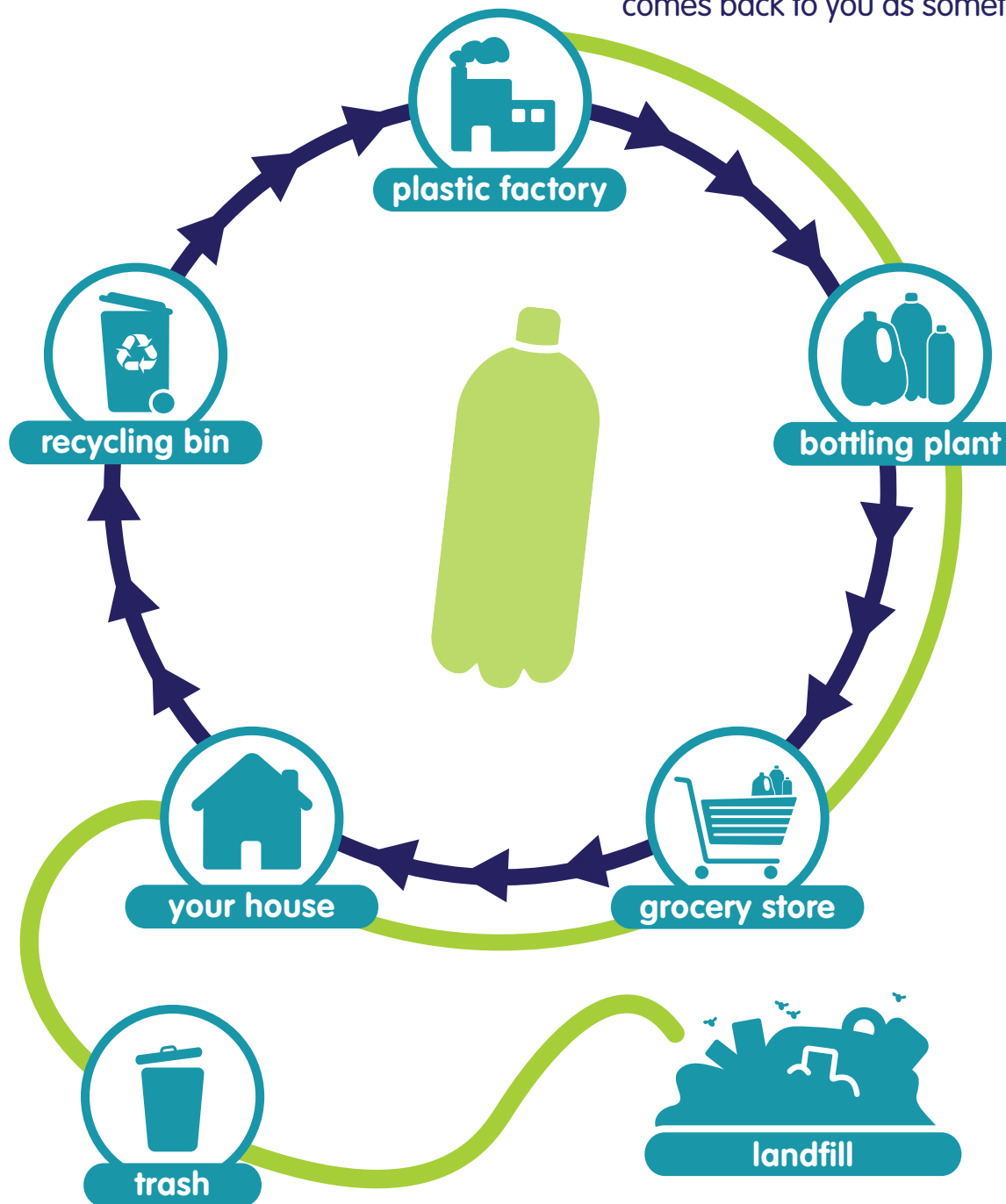
GOING BEYOND

1. Have your students complete the “Follow That Plastic Bottle” worksheet.
2. Ask students to bring examples of recyclable items to class for “show & tell.”
3. Read *The Lorax*, by Dr. Seuss. Discuss how the “truffula” trees could have been saved by recycling “thneeds.”
4. Collect new leaves, some soil, and dead leaves in several stages of breakdown. Discuss how nature recycles nutrients.

FOLLOW THAT PLASTIC BOTTLE

Student Worksheet

Use a red crayon to trace the path the plastic bottle takes to get from the plastic factory, to the bottling plant, to the grocery store, to your house, and finally to the landfill. Use a green crayon to trace the path the plastic bottle will take if it is recycled and it comes back to you as something new.



Which is better for the environment: throwing the bottle away or recycling it?